



PREVENTION TALK

LET'S TALK ABOUT TEENAGE DEPRESSION

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JULIE HOGAN, PH.D. DIRECTOR

By Diane Glass, Prevention Application Management Coordinator
Edited by Kris Gabrielsen, Associate Director

"Over the past 50 years, depression has become more common and is now recognized at increasingly younger ages. The term 'depression' can describe a normal human emotion; it can also refer to a mental health illness."¹ Depression is defined as an illness when the feelings of hopelessness, despair and sadness persist and interfere with a person's ability to function.²

As a young person begins to experience life's ups and downs in a more intense way, he or she may pull away or act out in a manner that leaves a parent confused, angry or scared. The teen may seem to be in a permanent bad mood, sleep too much or eat too little. These may be warning signs of depression. There are things parents can do to help their teen; however, learning more about depression is the first step.

REMEMBER

Depression is more than having the "blues" now and then. It is a persistent condition.³

If one or more of these signs of depression persists and disrupts the everyday routine of your teen, seek help:

- Frequent sadness, tearfulness, crying
- Hopelessness
- Decreased interest in activities, or inability to enjoy favorite activities
- Persistent boredom, low energy
- Social isolation, poor communication
- Low self esteem, guilt
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection, or failure
- Increased irritability, anger, hostility
- Difficulty with relationships
- Frequent physical complaints, such as head aches or stomachaches

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- Poor concentration
- Major changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Talk or efforts to run away from home
- Thoughts or expressions of suicide
- Alcohol and/or other drug abuse ³

"If you notice changes in your teen's behavior, take a deep breath and try not to over-react. Becoming over protective can make things worse."⁴ This change in behavior can be a signal to open the door of communication.

ACTION STEPS:

- Create a space where your teen feels safe to share his or her feelings in an open, honest way.
- Keep careful notes of behavior changes.
- Talk to your teen about the behavior changes you have noticed.
- For additional information visit the following website: www.focusas.com/Depression.html

TO THINK ABOUT:

- Young people with depression may have a hard time coping with everyday life.
- Some young people suffering from depression try to numb their feelings with alcohol, tobacco, or other illegal drugs.²
- Need help for your teen? Contact your school counselor, family physician or mental health counselor.

For more information call:

SOURCES CITED:

¹ Focus Adolescent Services. (2000). *Teen depression warning signs, information, getting help*. Retrieved December 31, 2003, from <http://www.focusas.com/Depression.html>

² National Institute of Mental Health. (2003). *Let's talk about depression* (NIH Publication No. 01-4162). Rockville, MD: Author.

³ American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (1998). *The depressed child* (No. 4) [Brochure]. Washington, DC: Author.

⁴ Teen Depression. (2003, October 13). *Causes of teen stress and tips for preventing adolescent depression*. Retrieved December 31, 2003, from <http://www.teen-depression.info/html/prevention.php3>